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February, 1944

A PROGRAM TO INCREASE EATING OF IRISH POTATOES IN 1944

Objectives:

To increase and maintain the rate of civilian consumption of potatoes through full utilization of all channels of information, education, and trade promotion.

Timing:

To begin immediately and to continue throughout the year. Peaks of emphasis will be reached in the months of February and March and (tentatively) in July and November.

Emphasis:

Potatoes as food, not as a marketing problem. This program is not an effort to save the farmer money, to save the Government embarrassment, to move a "surplus", to prevent waste, or to relieve any other "problem". It is an effort to give potatoes the recognition they deserve as a wartime food -- familiar, abundant, packed with nourishment, adaptable to innumerable dishes and ways of serving, and full of the fuel for energy and body warmth that we need in wartime.

Background:

Supply. In 1943, farmers grew a record-breaking crop of potatoes. The greatest acreage since 1935 (3,322 thousand acres) combined with the highest yields on record (139.9 per acre, average for U.S.) to produce a phenomenal crop (464.7 million bushels, compared with 370.5 in 1942, 370.2 average for 1935-39).

On January 1, 1944, there were 138 million bushels of potatoes in storage in the United States. These "old" potatoes (as distinguished from the "new" potatoes already moving in small volume from the winter producing areas) furnish the great bulk of potatoes for market until about May 1. Old crop potatoes cannot be carried in storage in volume much beyond this date. By that time, potatoes from the early growing sections of California and the South have reached heavy volume, and in a few weeks the intermediate crop from Long Island to the Eastern Shore of Virginia and westward is filling all markets. From October on, the late States (Maine, Idaho, North Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, and Colorado particularly) are shipping. These States, with New York and Pennsylvania, supply the great bulk of potatoes for market. It is the late crop that accounts for all storage stocks and supplies potato needs from late October to April or May.

The stocks of potatoes in storage on January 1 are ample to supply every possible demand until the heavy spring movement begins. No conceivable increase in civilian consumption is likely to cause a repetition of the temporary potato famine in the spring of 1943, although transportation difficulties might conceivably create localized shortages.

The early potato crop will cover about 244 thousand planted areas (239 thousand harvested last year, 193 thousand harvested in 1942). With average yields it should total about 37.2 million bushels, compared with 38.6 million bushels in 1943. The intermediate commercial crop is not yet planted, but WFA has called for 301 thousand planted acres (305 thousand harvested last year, 265 thousand harvested in 1942). With

average yields it should total about 32.8 million bushels, compared with 34.8 million bushels in 1943. The late crop is a long way off, but WFA is planning for about 2,955 thousand planted acres (2,381 thousand harvested last year, 1,932 thousand harvested in 1942). With average yields, it should total about 377 million bushels, compared with 363.5 million in 1943, 286.1 million in 1942.

Of course, the vagaries of nature can throw these estimates off quite a bit, as they did last year, when instead of "average" yields the late potato crop hit a record yield about 10 percent above the 1932-41 average. But they are the best estimates we have, and they point to a crop of 447 million bushels, compared with last year's all-time record of 464.7 million bushels, 370.5 million bushels in 1942, and a ten-year average, (1932-41), of 363.3 million bushels. This expected crop is a very large one, even though less than last year's, and it should fill all needs, with some to spare for contingencies.

Potatoes are among the foods which WFA is determined shall be available in general abundance at all seasons of the year for as long as rising civilian demand for food exceeds civilian supply. Civilians in 1944 should find ample stocks of potatoes in their markets at all times and they should make fullest use of them consistent with balanced diet.

Nutritional Values and Methods of Using. Potatoes concentrate a lot of food value in a small package. If potatoes are given the prominent place they deserve in wartime meals, they provide a good part of the day's need for Vitamin C (ascorbic acid), some Vitamin B₁ (thiamine), and iron and some other important minerals. They also provide some vegetable protein.

For more families than usual, potatoes will appear on breakfast, dinner, and supper tables -- and with good reason, considering their high batting average on the food value score.

Points to bear in mind in buying potatoes: Mealy kinds are good for baking and mashing. Waxy varieties are better for salads and for creaming. Jumbo sizes are best for baking; medium-sized ones are preferred for most purposes.

Homemakers should get the good from potatoes -- bake them, boil them in their jackets, eat the brown skins. If they must be pared, pare thin. Pare them just before they're cooked. Don't soak them, or minerals and vitamins are lost. And use the liquid in which pared potatoes are cooked, it contains food values.

In preparing potatoes, variety is the spice, simplicity the goal. "With jackets on" is the rule for good eating and most food value. The potato should stand on its own laurels. Save time, money, and scarcer ingredients by serving potatoes unadorned most often.

Here's the way to have the perfect baked potato: Wash and dry

potatoes of as nearly the same size as possible. Put into a medium-hot oven and bake until tender -- 40 to 60 minutes. For soft skin, rub a little fat on the potato before putting it in the oven. Save fuel by baking while other foods are being oven-cooked. Cook with any baked dish except one calling for a very slow or very hot oven. After cooking, cut criss-cross gashes in the skin on one side. Then pinch the potato so some of the soft inside part pops up through the broken skin. Drop in meat drippings, bits of crisp-fried salt pork, butter, or other table fat.

For an extra special, cut large baked potatoes in half, scoop out the soft part, mash, and season with fat, hot milk, and salt. Stuff back into the potato shells, brush the top with fat, and brown in the oven.

Just as good as baked potatoes, and maybe even better in food value, are potatoes boiled in the jacket. Scrub medium-sized potatoes and drop them into a kettle of salted, boiling water -- enough to cover the potatoes. Cook until tender and drain at once so they won't get waterlogged. Serve in the jacket, or peel and season with salt and meat drippings or other fat.

Some cold day, try quick potato soup, with 2 cups of raw potatoes, 2 tablespoons of fat, 1 tablespoon of chopped onion, 1 quart of milk, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of salt, and pepper to taste. Chop the potatoes fine and grate them. Add potatoes, fat and onion to milk. Cook the mixture over low heat until the potatoes are tender. By that time the starch from the potatoes will have thickened the milk slightly. Add salt and pepper.

An old favorite is fried potatoes, country style. Pare enough raw potatoes to make a quart when sliced thin or chopped fine. Put in a frying pan with 2 tablespoons meat drippings or other fats. Brown a little chopped onion in the fat, if you like. Cover the frying pan closely and cook the potatoes over medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes. When they are browned on the bottom, turn them with a knife to brown the other side.

And for a change from the old stand-bys, there's potato puff, or potato hot-pot. And for potato left-overs there are hash browned potatoes, potato salad (hot or cold), creamed potatoes, Shepherd's pie, and all the other good ways to use cooked potatoes -- some family favorites, some forgotten.

The potato is an all-American vegetable, and a mighty good one to have around in plentiful supply.

Price. Potatoes are one of the basic war crops for which WFA is assuring farmers a satisfactory price as an incentive to greater production and marketing. The price support is provided by Government loans and by direct WFA purchases where necessary. It is graduated by time intervals so as to encourage storage through the winter and to bring about more orderly marketing. This price support also varies for different grades and for different localities.

At the same time, potatoes are under price ceilings, which operate at every level from shipper to retailer.

Prices of potatoes in 1944 will be about the same as in 1943 -- probably a few cents higher a bushel. They are generally highest in April and May and begin dropping steadily to the lowest point in October and November, when they begin rising again. Of course, there may be localized and temporary fluctuations in this general curve. The seasonal peaks and troughs are less extreme under wartime controls than they normally are.

Prices of potatoes seem high (and are high) in comparison with pre-war prices. Remember that in many of those pre-war "surplus" years, farmers had to sell at disastrously low prices. Potatoes are not high compared with other cost-of-living items and other foods. With sweet potatoes, they top the list of all foods in food value per penny of cost.

Potato sales in 1943 reached a new high -- in volume as well as dollars -- at prices quite comparable to those expected to prevail in 1944. There is no reason to believe that price will deter consumer demand, since potatoes will continue to be one of very best food buys of all.

Copy Themes and Objectives: The following list of suggestions is not all-inclusive, of course, but it covers most of the principal ideas which will be followed in WFA and OWI sponsored services and materials:

1. Potatoes as food.
 - Packed with energy for hard-workers.
 - Potatoes are in Group 3 of the Basic 7 Foods
 - Contain significant amount of protein.
 - Rich in certain vitamins and minerals as well as starch.
2. Ways of using potatoes.
 - New and different ways of using.
 - Potatoes for breakfast.
 - Ingenious potato dishes to space out scarcer foods of similar dietary purpose.
 - Meal planning around potatoes.
 - Combinations with potatoes -- meat and potatoes, etc.
 - Getting and saving the most food value from potatoes.
 - How to select potatoes; best varieties for different uses.
 - U.S. No. 2 grades for many purposes as good as No. 1's.
 - Restaurant and institutional users can give more attention to spuds
 - Suggested recipes and meal plans for public eating places.
3. Colorful history and geography of potatoes.
 - How they originated in the New World and migrated to Europe and back.
 - Their importance in Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe, and how it grew.
 - Potatoes in Ireland.
 - Potatoes in America, particularly in Aroostook County, Maine; Idaho; and the Red River Valley.
 - How we keep America supplied with potatoes around the calendar.
4. Home Storage.
 - The late potatoes (late October on) can be stored in most

homes with a few simple precautions.

Materials available from Office of Distribution, WFA: (except starred item)

Leaflet (free) "Potatoes in Popular Ways" (For wide distribution, though not available for give-away in stores.)

Mats (3 column by 7 inches) suitable for use in newspaper advertising or other ways.

Limited number of copies of FOOD TRADE LETTER of last October ("Potatoes the Victory Food Selection") giving many suggestions for various types of point-of-sale materials, menu clip-ons, and such which might be made up by stores and restaurants for their own use.

** Basic 7 Table Tents for restaurants are available in sets of 7 (one for each food group) at 10 cents a set from the Government Printing Office in Washington. The tent for Group 3 features potatoes.

Radio spot announcements and scripts.

Short features suitable for use of food page editors, etc.

(Regional offices may have other materials or be able to supply special needs, although no store posters and other store advertising materials will be furnished by WFA. Several organizations of shippers will furnish certain materials for store promotion as a part of their regular sales program.

Regional Offices of Distribution, War Food Administration:

Information and assistance on any phases of this program may be obtained from the following; address Regional Director of Distribution, War Food Administration:

150 Broadway
New York 7, N. Y.

Western Union Building
Atlanta 3, Georgia

425 Wilson Building
Dallas 1, Texas

5 South Wabash Avenue
Chicago 3, Illinois

821 Market Street
San Francisco 3, Calif.

Campaign Outline:

War Food Administration

Office of Information

All information services of current nature.

All channels for informing WFA employees and collaborators.

Office of Distribution

Civilian Food Requirements Branch

Enlist cooperation of wholesale and retail trade in full scale merchandising program.

Enlist support of public eating places in promoting consumption.

Extend use of potatoes in school lunch programs.

Urge in-plant feeding establishments to promote.

Develop and activate program for utilization of food industry committees.

Contact Army, Navy, Veterans Administration, Maritime Commission, institutional users (prisons, hospitals, etc.), and other large feeders among State and Federal agencies.

Office of Distribution

Nutrition Programs Branch

Enlist support of Nutrition Committees.

Contact public health officers or others whose support may be used.

Office of Distribution

Marketing Reports Division

All press, radio, and other current services.

Services to women's radio directors, magazine food editors, etc.

Contacts with women's organizations.

Visual services, mats, photos, etc.

Contacts with home economists, home service representatives, home management supervisors, etc.

Contacts with educational leaders and departments.

Office of Distribution

Fruit and Vegetable Branch

Enlist cooperation of shippers, receivers and jobbers in stepping-up supply on less plentiful markets, in packaging in desired units, in continuing shipment of quality potatoes, in pooling carload lots, in culling and in repackaging where necessary, etc.

Office of War Information

Overall support through available national media.

Contacts with national advertisers.